

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/4

White Storm

Gary Metras

PRESA PRESS

Box 792, Rockford, MI, 49341

ISBN 978-0-9965026-9-6

2018, 82 PAGES, \$15.95, paperback.

Review by David Giannini

Gary Metras, the publisher of Adastra Press, has had several books of his own poetry published by other presses through the years, most recently *The Moon in the Pool*. After several readings of his new book, *White Storm*, published by Presa Press, I am impressed by the deepening of his words and thought, old mythologies brought to bear, his envisioning of aging mortality while always anchoring the poems in present concerns, a dailiness and the loving of his wife, an attentiveness to things and the weather (and the weather of things and people,) and snatches of humor, including references to John Lennon and "Lucy." His poems often have a classic, lyric and almost mythological bearing as if he sometimes channels ancients, but without losing direct contemporaneity of language.

The first poem in *White Storm* is the title poem, a poem of sleeplessness, observation, memory and foreboding, which begins

*"Old Man night is unsettled
In his white haired sleep."*

and the poem concludes the following morning on an almost Rilkean note:

*". . . Where are the angels
about to sing our praise and the praises
of light and grass and the field solid under foot,
so we could rise from the bed
and step into the simple day?"*

Metras can speak easily of an annoying pebble in a hiker's shoe in one poem, and then mention Plutarch and Chaucer appearing at the same banquet in the longest poem in the book, "Turning the Wheel."

I sometimes sense Metras is talking with the late Jack Gilbert in his poems. Greek mythology often informs both poets' works. For example, Metras' poem, "White Crow," begins:

*"When the white crow came to tell Apollo
that his wife, Coronis, had taken
a mortal lover, the god's anger grew larger than
the island of Delos, than the air above the Aegean. . . ."*

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One of the later poems in *White Storm*, "Wind on a Sunny Day," features

*"The baby in her chair studies a chain
of plastic links. . . ."*

and ends with a message for us all:

*"She wants to know the puzzle in her hand.
She wants to solve the mouth's yearning.*

One she will forget. The other could rule a life."

In *White Storm*, Gary Metras has given us a poetry of reflections, looking back, but staying present, holding understanding and feel for what mortality is ever bringing us, not just dying and death itself, but how words travel off the page to carry us beyond ourselves for others, a legacy of sounds we may savor and hold close in our lives. I highly recommend this collection by a poet young in his upper years.